WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART

"ANNE ELIZABETH," BY MARTHA WALTER.
On exhibition in the Reinhardt Galleries.

ONE benefit in a fashion is that everybody follows it. There is no chance for talent to lie fallow or remain obscure. Everybody is tested. Nobody escapes. When the fashion passes, behold, one or two remain to us, who have succeeded far beyond all the others, who represent the particular experience beautifully for us, and eventually become enrolled by historians among the masters.

The present enthusiasm for etching got under way quietly some time ago, branching out no doubt from the successes of certain living English etchers, and now we may almost begin to boast of an American school. A short time ago it was difficult to make a general exhibition of any serious interest. Now we not only have a highly successful society of etchers but "one man shows" of etchings, of great frequency and also of real merit.

The native collectors have been forced to take cognizance of American etchers, and if the progress keeps up at the present rate we shall soon compel the foreign collectors to notice us. When the Japanese and the Germans begin snapping up our prints upon their first appearances we may then really begin marshalling our new army of etchers into order and apportion out our leaderships. But not until then. There is no hurry. We must give our own amateurs a chance to make a few selections in peace. Besides, we are still too busy recruiting. Every day new volunteers rally to the flag. Mr. MacLaughlin, Mr. Andree Smith, Mr. Pennell and Mr. Plowman have been rejoiced recently by the accession of two new and worthy comrades. Childe Hassam and Frank W. Benson, who are both academicians and members of the "The Ten," have become etchers. Who will be the next?

The term "painterlike" is frequently used as a compliment in speaking of etched plates, and it is undeniable that the quality it hints at adds a charm to the etched work. Too great a dependence upon painterlike effects can work a harm, however. The highest praise after all lies in the term "etcherlike." It is a matter for pleasant surprise to find that the new work of Childe Hassam, now on view in the galleries of F. Keppel & Co., bids for attention in the second category. Mr. Hassam has painted as an impressionist for many years and has etched only recently. Nevertheless, in practically every plate there is evidence of a facility and an aptitude for the peculiar use of the needle that produces the brilliant line.

J. Alden Weir, the president of the academy, writes a discreet little foreword to the catalogue in which he contents himself with wishing Mr. Hassam well in his new medium, a wish in which Mr. Hassam's other friends will heartily join. Mr. Weir adds that he had always felt that Mr. Hassam, who was "in his rare moods an impressionist of remarkable ability, would add a new note in etching."

Three years ago the painter made a few etchings, but it was not until the past summer that accident more than design impelled him to try again with the needle. A fellow artist, who etched, happened to be his neighbor in the country near Cos Cob, and placed his press and atelier at Mr. Hassam's service. There a number of plates were begun, and once fairly launched in these experiments Mr. Hassam caught the true etching fever, and gave almost his entire summer to making plates and printing them. He has been exceedingly industrious, and already an exhibition that numbers seventy-five plates has become possible.

The subjects embrace all those that the artist has already touched on canvas; figures, interior, still life and landscapes. As an artist remains the same no matter what medium he uses, it was practically inevitable that Mr. Hassam's most assured etchings would be landscapes. Quite a number of landscapes in the present exhibition may be recommended at once to the attention of amateurs.

It is idle to attempt to define the things permissible in an etching, for a good etcher soon makes one forget that there are such things as limitations. One quality almost invariably present in the makeup of the successful etcher is directness of expression, and when this is heightened by a soupçon of naiveté, almost everything he does is agreeable. For this reason it is possible to take a great deal of pleasure in the earliest of these plates, wherein our artist, as an etcher, is seen to be feeling his way.

Mr. Hassam, the painter, of course has had many years of experience. He knows pretty well before he starts upon a picture what effect he hopes to secure. It is simply part of being a professional that he has accumulated a number of tricks, or shall we say expediencies, that have become a large part of his vocabulary. In dropping the brush and taking up the more nervous needle, all these "phrases," so to speak, dropped away from him, and it is amusing and entertaining to see him putting down lines, as hopefully and directly as an infant, as though to say, "let this represent a tree," or "let's suppose this is to be a river bank."

This sort of thing is so attractive in etching that there are times when one considers it to be the essential quality. Certainly one sees it over and over again in the best etchings. It can be located in some of Seymour-Haden's finest landscapes and even in Rembrandt's most solemn designs. The way etchers represent the sun and the sun's rays is an instance of the sort of thing I mean. It is certainly to be wished that in gaining further experience Mr. Hassam will not lose this refreshing and etcherlike frankness.

To Mr. Hassam's figures and interiors not so much praise may be given. His outdoor architecture is bathed in light or balanced in masses so that it escapes the question of drawing, but in the interiors there are too many discrepancies of perspective and construction for them to pass easily. Doors are too thin, do not hinge properly at the places where they are supposed to be attached, and chairs, tables and other objects are uncertainly put together. These things are not the whole of art, of course, but they are an important part. When too many things in a picture wabble and lack substance the resultant weakness is unpleasant. Particularly is this so in a print which is always being studied at close range.

Frank W. Benson is revealed as an etcher in the gallery of Kennedy & Co., where about fifty of his new prints are shown. Like his fellow member of "The Ten," Mr. Hassam, he shows a commendable desire to be taken as an etcher pure and simple. It was a foregone conclusion in his case, as in Mr. Hassam's, that his and the still healthier habits of the ducks themselves. The wash drawings have been seen before. I believe I have already written of them that they were clever but "spotty." Much original observation is incorporated in them, of the flight of the ducks, their swift descents and wild alarums; but they are somewhat too hardly and sharply drawn and there are usually too many ducks in each picture, so that the eye is offended by these objects spotted over the page.

In the etchings, however, this is not so. There are, it is true, usually less ducks, but even when the theme is almost that of the drawing the etching is held together in some unnoticeable way, sometimes by a gradation in the inking of the plate, but more often by the art with which the needle has been used.

There are other things than ducks, though. Sometimes the hunter himself appears. "Dusk" is a large plate with a figure of a man silhouetted across a light patch in the waters and the lowering sky above is full of rich color and boldly etched.

Miss Martha Walker has been remarked for several years past as an artist of talent and it is a pleasure to record the fact that the present exhibition of her work in the Reinhardt Galleries marks a distinct advance for her. A number of her canvases show an increase of force, and the one that is reproduced on this page, the "Anne Elizabeth" is a most attractive work of art.

From the first Miss Walker's touch has been distinguished by the quality that we call "French," although, to be precise, we should say "Latin," for Boldini and Fortuny have been its past masters. The brush stroke is playful and vivacious, but better than that, has always had the power to give illusion. Miss Walker's natural good spirits have, however, been held in check by feminine timidity. Her work has given pleasure for the promises it has held out rather than for actual achievement. With the present exhibition the time has come when this artist's work may be accepted without reserve. There are in fact very few artists to-day in America who can get as much spontaneity into paint as Miss Walker at her best secures. A number of her canvases of children romping upon the beach or playing with nurse are wholly delightful. They are excellent as color, excellent as representation and excellent as painting.

The peculiar atmospheric effects along our beaches interest this artist greatly and she gets them with especial success in all her essays. The children playing with the balloon in one of the pictures is a fine instance of impromptu life and gayety obtained by judicial composition. Occasionally Miss Walker overcrowds her canvas and confuses her figures, but whatever happens she never fails to bathe the whole episode in the true ocean air.

Miss "Anne Elizabeth," as may be seen, has a laughing, fresh young face, surmounted by a brown hat that the artist has enjoyed painting, and wearing an amber necklace that catches the light curiously. The amber has been swiftly put in, but it is there. The other large figure pieces all have good color and individual virtues, but lack the completion of "Anne Elizabeth."

The readers of Miss Mildred Aldrich's "Hilltop on the Marne" will recall that Miss Aldrich's house includes among its ornaments a photograph of Whistler's portrait of his mother, for Miss Aldrich leaned against it when she learned that the bombardment of her cottage was a possibility of the battle of the Marne, but fortunately by an effort of dual consciousness saved herself from smashing it, in that crisis.

The vivacious letters do not describe all, however, of Miss Aldrich's art collections, or perhaps the judicious editors thought it wiser to keep some of the facts from the public. The truth is, however, that the cottage, in addition to the perfectly safe and now classic portrait of Whistler's Mother, boasts some quite modern works, including one by no less a person than Henri Matisse.

Miss Aldrich's readers are quite aware that by no stretch of the imagination may Miss Aldrich be regarded as slim. They also know that she never hesitates to tell a story against herself. She considers the episode of her first encounter with Matisse as being quite against herself.

This is the tale:

It was a little dinner in the house of Miss Gertrude Stein, on the Rue de Fleurus, and some particularly choice spirits had assembled. It was in the period of the early first glory of Miss Stein's salon and all the Matisse paintings ere upon the walls, including the extraordinary reclining female figure that Mr. Leo Stein when he took up the cult for Renoir, sold, I believe, to M. August Kahn.

This Venus by Matisse is very wonderful, so everybody has always agreed, but the pose of the figure is undeniably contorted. Miss Aldrich, catching sight of the picture during the middle of the dinner, and being greatly astonished by it, made unconsciously a "moue" at it. Greatly to her horror, Matisse happened to glance at her at just that moment and caught her making a face at his "Venus."

In an effort to retrieve herself from the awkward situation Miss Aldrich stammered:

"I was just thinking, M. Matisse, that I couldn't take that pose!"

"Really, mademoiselle," replied Matisse, looking her over coolly, "I don't think you could."

Mme. Bongard has invited THE SUN'S art chronicler to visit an exhibition of modern painting which opens to the public in the galleries at 5 Rue de Penthièvre, Paris, on November 9. Included in the show are peintures, aquarelles et dessins by André Derain, Raoul Dufy, R. de la Fresnaye, Friesz, H. Hayden, Herbin, Kisling, Marie Laurencin, F. Leger, A. Lhote, Lewicka, Henri Matisse, Moricand, Pablo Picasso and Vlaminck. THE SUN'S art chronicler regrets that the delay in the receipt of this invitation prevents an acceptance.

The following bit of wisdom comes from *Art Notes*, just issued by the Macbeth Galleries:

"That we have a new, a modern school of art in our midst is a decidedly obvious fact, and that it is gaining a strong footing—that section of it that is not freakish—is very certain. A question that naturally arises in this connection is, What effect is this having on the so-called old fashioned painters?

"I believe it has very little, if any, effect on their clientele. Instead of its being divided the chances are it is more likely to be strengthened in its views and our old friends are in no danger of starving. The new men are creating a new clientele, either from the ranks of those who found little or no satisfaction in old methods or among those who by a fresh appeal have been forced to a first consideration of pictures.

"No thoroughly good pictures, viewed from the standpoint of the recognized big things in past art, can ever be neglected; neither can there be neglect for really successful accomplishments by artists who have chosen to adopt new methods."

The death of Eugene Bonneton at the front from asphyxiating gases has just been reported from Paris.

M. Bonneton, writes one of his friends in *Le Temps*, was born in Tournon, in the Ardeche, and when he came to Paris to complete his education studied at the Beaux Arts under Albert Maignan and Luc Olivier Merson. In contact with them he acquired the taste for all that was scrupulously correct and conscientious in art. To these qualities he added very great delicacy.

The necessity of restricting the expenses of life to the minimum led him to locate in the Charlemagne quarter, two steps from the Gobelins. He found in the old houses of this quarter, in the leprous walls of the buildings which press now on the banks of the Bièvre, as in the days when Watteau sketched them, the motifs for a work which he managed to make quite individual. His paintings were remarked early and he quickly gained honors in the Salon des Artistes Français, the State and the city both buying some of his canvases. In the international exhibitions he has also been honored, and at this moment his "Port Saint-Nicholas" represents him in San Francisco.

PORTRAIT STUDY BY CHILDE HASSAM.
On exhibition in the Montross Galleries.

PORTRAIT OF POULTNEY BIGELOW, BY HARRY FRANKLIN WALTMAN.
Recently shown at Salmagundi Club.

"THE DANCE," ETCHING BY CHILDE HASSAM.
On exhibition in the galleries of Frederick Keppel & Co.